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1961/05/04

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-8 MAY 1961

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NOTHING TO BE WRITTEN IN THIS MARGIN

Minutes

CONFIDENTIAL

CUBA

Please see Mr. Warner's minute of May 2 below, recording his conversation with Mr. Schlesinger about Cuba.

2. As Mr. Warner says, there is nothing new in this, but there is an element of self-justification in what Mr. Schlesinger told Mr. Warner. Incredible as it may appear, men of Mr. Schlesinger's intellectual ability were taken in by those in the C.I.A. who planned and believed in this operation. This partly explains why President Kennedy approved it. The Lord Privy Seal may therefore care to glance at Mr. James Reston's article, "How Cambridge Failed the First Test" published in the New York Times of April 28.

3. On points of fact; first, the phrase "only limited assistance" in paragraph 5 is misleading. The insurgents received all support short of direct military intervention, and the fact that an operation of this kind was being planned was well-known to United States businessmen with interests in Cuba, who gave it every encouragement, a year ago; secondly, the expression "Cuban patriots" in the first sentence of paragraph 3 overlooks perhaps the worst blunder made by the C.I.A. in the execution (as opposed to the planning) of the operation. The invaders included a number of identifiable pro-Batista Cubans (since taken prisoner and made full use of by Castro) and excluded the most important leader of the anti-Castro Cuban Underground, Dr. Manolo Bay, who appears never to have been informed of the C.I.A.'s plans at all, although he was in the U.S. at the time.

4. The best comment on the whole enterprise came, a week before the invasion, from the President of the Cuban Revolutionary Council in the U.S., Dr. Miro Cardona, who said publicly that an invasion of Cuba would be an "absurdity".

R.H.G. Edmonds

4/11

(R.H.G. Edmonds)

May 4, 1961

Mr. [unclear]

H.A. [unclear]

G. [unclear]

Mrs. [unclear]

K. [unclear]

G. [unclear]

Thank you for [unclear]
Mr. [unclear] [unclear]

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CUBA

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END
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The Lord Privy Seal asked me to make a short record of what Mr. Schlesinger told him yesterday about Cuba.

2. Mr. Schlesinger said that the plan for an invasion of the island by volunteer Cuban forces was worked out under the Eisenhower administration. It only came up to Mr. Kennedy after he had been in office for some time. He directed that it be submitted to the Chiefs of Staff, who said that it was militarily sound. The C.I.A. confirmed the intelligence estimate on which it was based. Mr. Adlai Stevenson, Mr. Cowe, Mr. Rusk and Senator Fulbright were all opposed to it but Mr. Rusk never objected to it at any stage.
3. Mr. Schlesinger said that one of the difficulties was that the Cuban patriots were people of immense drive and ambition and that they had been extremely keen to undertake the venture. I asked whether this was not perhaps because they had assumed that if they went wrong the Americans would be bound to step in to save them. Mr. Schlesinger replied that this was certainly not the case. He himself had been sent down to Central America to talk to the leaders and to tell them that if they undertook this venture they could not expect United States military intervention. He could not be sure that they had necessarily accepted this as the last word, but he had certainly made it abundantly plain to them and the invasion had been launched on that understanding.
4. Mr. Schlesinger said that the arrest by American intelligence personnel of the Cuban leaders while the revolt was in progress had actually taken place and had infuriated the President who was taking disciplinary action.
5. I gathered that the Americans had given the rebels only limited assistance. The money came from the United States and the training had been arranged by the Americans. They had also helped in the arrangements to get the force to Cuba.
6. I do not suppose there is anything new in this.
7. At the end of our conversation I asked Mr. Schlesinger if he thought that an intervention in Laos would be any more successful than one in Cuba. He replied "Certainly not if it was in any way dependent on the co-operation of the Laotians." A full-scale Western military intervention might be another thing.

F. A. Warner

(F. A. Warner)
May 2, 1961

P.S. to Lord Privy Seal

Copy to American Dept.

*Thank you
A. 2*

*RSK
sf.*

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